

Symposium on *God, Locke, and Equality*

A glance at the review essay by Gerald Russello, which follows the symposium, will remind any reader that serious Catholics have long had doubts about the compatibility between their faith and Lockean liberalism. But in his recent book, *God, Locke, and Equality*, Jeremy Waldron has brought the question of the relation between Christianity and liberty democracy to the attention of non-believers as well as believers, by arguing not only that the founder of modern liberalism, John Locke, based his own prescriptions on Christian principles but also that there is no other, much less better basis for an assertion of human equality, then or now.

As the contributors to this symposium show, both propositions are controversial. On the basis of a survey of the Locke literature leading up to Waldron's book, Paul Sigmund argues that the "Straussian" contention that Locke was not merely a secular, but even an anti-Christian author has been decisively refuted by Waldron among others. Praising Waldron not only for his careful reading and presentation of Locke's arguments but also for his insistence on their enduring importance and relevance, Michael Zuckert nevertheless raises questions about the accuracy of Waldron's account. In particular, he suggests, it is important to distinguish "natural theology," which Locke does employ, from Christian doctrines (like the trinity and the resurrection), which he does not. Agreeing with Sigmund and Waldron that Locke himself was a believing Christian, John Dunn expresses concern not only about the possible misreading of an historical author outside his immediate context, but also and most emphatically about the contemporary political implications of Waldron's contention that Christianity remains the only foundation for an assertion of human equality. On the basis of a careful reading of Locke's *First Treatise*, Robert Faulkner argues in opposition to Waldron that Locke was no Christian. Whether or not Locke himself was a Christian, Jeffrey Reiman contends, also in opposition to Waldron, there is a purely secular defense of moral equality to be found in Locke. Waldron then responds, thematically, to his critics.

—C.Z.

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